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Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Abyei

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 32 of Security Council resolution 2352 (2017), in which the Council requested me to continue to inform it of progress in implementing the mandate of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), and to bring to its immediate attention any serious violation of the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement on temporary arrangements for the administration and security of the Abyei Area, of 20 June 2011 (S/2011/384, annex). The present report provides an update on the situation and the activities of UNISFA in Abyei, and on the operations of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism since the issuance of my previous report (S/2017/312) on 11 April 2017, and covers the period until 24 July 2017.

II. Abyei

Security

2. Despite a number of criminal incidents, the security situation in the Abyei Area is generally calm but remains unpredictable. In the absence of progress in the implementation of the Agreement of 20 June 2011 and on the final status of the territory, intercommunal tensions and the proliferation of arms create a continued risk. UNISFA has thus continued to conduct operations for the maintenance of peace and stability in Abyei.

3. The Government of the Sudan has also continued to maintain about 120 oil police personnel at the Diffra oil complex, in violation of the Agreement of 20 June 2011 and, in particular, Security Council resolutions 1990 (2011) and 2046 (2012). There were also reports of elements and some personnel of the Sudan People's Liberation Army present within the Abyei Area, although the exact number is not known. The movement of unknown armed persons was also reported between Goli, Alal, Diffra and Noong in Sectors North and Centre.

4. As highlighted in the previous report, the conflict prevention and mitigation strategy adopted by UNISFA for the last dry season, based on the military disengagement line between the Ngok Dinka and the Misseriya communities, has been effective in reducing organized crime and large-scale violence, although sporadic acts of violence and petty crime continue. The mission's planned and

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selective easing of the line of disengagement enabled the Misseriya herders to gain access to grazing land and water in the southern and south-eastern parts of the Abyei Area. Moreover, as part of its conflict prevention and mitigation strategy, UNISFA enhanced its deployment at Noong and Alal, in Sector Centre, and Dungoup in Sector South. Noong is now a permanent company operating base, while Alal has been temporarily vacated as part of the rainy season redeployment.

5. The movement of communities in and out of Abyei posed a challenge. Approximately 35,000 Misseriya were in the process of reverse migration by the time of issuance of the report. The migration of roughly 1,000 to 1,200 Felata tribesmen through the Abyei Area, along with their cattle, was also reported. These are 1 of the 10 Sudanese "Arabic" nomadic tribes that undertake north-south migration every year. Their general corridor of movement is 200 to 250 km further east of the Abyei Area, in the general area of Tishwin. However, in 2017, while returning, they encountered difficulties because of the ongoing security situation and instability in some areas in South Sudan, and changed from their traditional route, moving east and west. The mission has facilitated the return of Ngok Dinka who had fled the area in the aftermath of 2011 crisis. The Ngok Dinka returned to several settlements in the southern and central Abyei Area.

6. There has been consistent movement of people from South Sudan into Abyei. With renewed conflict in July 2016 in South Sudan and the spread of violence to estern Bahr el-Ghazal, 3,000 Ngok Dinka have returned to Abyei. As a result of displacement, a sizeable influx of people from South Sudan into the area of the Amiet common market has been noted. As a result, the market is under strain in terms of water and certain other basic resources. Coupled with this, members of the peace committee reported an increase in drugs and cases of prostitution associated with the two activities of the common market. This reportedly includes prostitution of underage girls, many of whom are allegedly from Twic County, South Sudan.

7. The grazing of Misseriya herds in areas inhabited by Ngok Dinka resulted in some instances of cattle-rustling. On 6 May, a cattle-rustling incident involving 45 animals was reported by locals in Mijak, in the southern sector; UNISFA dispatched a patrol but was unable to locate either the assailants or the cattle. A case of cattle-rustling in the area of Arik (Sector South) was reported on 18 June by the Ngok Dinka, involving some 200 head of cattle; UNISFA ground and aerial search patrols retrieved 58 of the stolen cattle, which were returned to their owner. On 30 June, an unknown armed assailant raided 43 cattle belonging to a Misseriya herder at Sink, in Sector North. The assailant killed one person and injured another. UNISFA troops were dispatched to the area and exchanged fire with the assailant, who abandoned the cattle and fled. The cattle were handed over to the Misseriya owner.

8. Criminality continues to be largely intra-ethnic. The pattern of crime established over the course of the reporting period indicates largely petty crime related to robbery, theft, armed robbery, carjacking and cattle-rustling. The central sector continues to register most criminal activities owing to hotspots like the Amiet common market and north-south movement of traders along the only all-weather road going from Abyei northwards towards Diffra and Farouk. Criminal incidents during the reporting period included an attack, on 16 May, by a group of armed men on civilians at the Amiet common market, leaving one civilian dead and five wounded. UNISFA captured two of the Misseriya assailants, who were handed over to the Misserya traditional leaders on 21 May at the UNISFA Diffra camp in Sector North.

9. On 13 June, there was an armed robbery and carjacking at the Amiet common market. A UNISFA patrol gave chase, seizing one rocket-propelled grenade launcher

and recovering the carjacked vehicle, as well as a sum of 20,635 South Sudanese pounds, which was returned to its owner. On 18 June, there was another attack with a hand grenade on civilians at the Amiet common market, injuring five Dinka men. The assailant — a Dinka — was detained, interrogated, and, in the presence of the Dinka Paramount Chief, handed over for further prosecution by the South Sudanese authorities.

10. On 10 July, the Amiet common market was temporarily closed in the aftermath of violent incidents in the area: on 7 July, a group of five armed persons hijacked a goods-laden pick-up vehicle south of the market and, on 9 July, an armed group of four Misseriya opened fire on a vehicle in the Dokura area along the Amiet road. Two Dinka civilians were killed and three others injured. In another incident, on 8 July, a group of unknown armed persons shot and killed a woman and injured a man in the vicinity of Marial Achak. In all three incidents, search operations and special patrols to trace the assailants were immediately launched but the armed groups could not be located.

11. As a result of these incidents, UNISFA facilitated a meeting between the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya community leaders on 15 July at Todach to discuss the security situation and the status of the Amiet common market. The leaders agreed on the formation of various committees to handle issues and challenges facing the market. The Ngok Dinka and Misseriya will provide an equal number of representatives as members of the committees. Traditional community leaders from both groups have agreed to reopen the market after the preparation and formation of the committees. UNISFA has emphasized its commitment to implement its mandate to secure the Abyei Area and to protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence. Following an agreement between the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya community leaders to allow the two communities to commence trading activities at the market, the market was temporarily reopened on 19 July prior to its official reopening on 22 July. On 22 July, on the Amiet market-Diffra road, between Goli and Todach, unknown armed men shot dead eight Misseriya civilians and injured one. Search operations were launched by UNISFA and the incident is being investigated.

12. In the wake of these incidents, and in addition to its standing security measures, UNISFA has instituted mandatory force protection for all movement of staff of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes north of Dokura/Rumajak, with instructions for a minimum of two persons in a vehicle and obligatory radio contact. Movement off the main roads between Abyei and Agok also requires force protection, with at least two persons per vehicle and radio contact.

13. Given the absence of the Abyei Police Service, the UNISFA police component continued its efforts to support the maintenance of law and order through community-based interactive patrols. UNISFA police conducted 376 independent and joint security observation and community interactive patrols, covering a total distance of 8,294 km. The UNISFA police continued capacity-building of community protection committees in accordance with paragraph 16 of resolution 2287 (2016). Co-locating with community protection committees, UNISFA police provided training on managing law and order situations and performing administrative functions. The establishment of community protection committees in northern Abyei continued to be delayed, owing to the continuing reservations of the Government of the Sudan.

14. The UNISFA police attended joint security meetings together with military and community stakeholders in the central and northern sectors, sharing community policing techniques and promoting safer neighbourhoods as a way to protect civilians. It also conducted crime prevention campaigns on safety and induction training sessions covering sexual and gender-based violence, sexual exploitation

and abuse, gender equality and gender mainstreaming. Meanwhile, UNISFA police worked continuously to strengthen the community protection committees in the Abyei Area, including the Amiet common market joint peace committee, and mentored them regarding detention procedures and handling of cases, criminal incidents and suspects.

15. In line with the UNISFA mandate to confiscate and destroy weapons, UNISFA military, police and the United Nations Mine Action Service destroyed 25 confiscated weapons and 478 rounds of small arms ammunition at the UNISFA weapons and ammunition management facility, thus contributing to the overall safety and security of the Abyei Area. The process was observed by national monitors from the Sudan and South Sudan. Twenty-seven km of priority routes were verified as safe from explosive hazards. The routes included those used by company operating bases for robust area patrolling.

16. Non-technical survey and mine risk education activities in various communities led to the identification and destruction of 49 items of explosive remnants of war. Mine risk education messages were delivered to 45 UNISFA military observers and national monitors. Similar messages were delivered to 23,654 men, women and children living in the Abyei Area, including nomadic herdsmen and returnees.

17. From 12 April to 21 July, UNISFA conducted 9,906 day and night area domination patrols and 264 United Nations police patrols. It also undertook 2,548 escorts and facilitated 53 joint security committee meetings with community leaders in the Abyei Area. Owing to the restricted reach of military personnel, military observers and police during the rainy season, the number of patrols has been considerably reduced.

18. On the basis of a detailed threat assessment, the UNISFA military proposed to enhance its tactical reach towards the north-western corridor, parts of which were either inaccessible or had inadequate deployment of troops. In alignment with its plans, UNISFA undertook the opening of four routes to facilitate military operations and passage for civilians: east of Diffra, close to the border; south-west of Diffra towards Al Shamam-Andal, and thereafter connecting the same route with Goli; Alal-Dahlob-Shegei; and Al Shamam-Dahlob.

Political developments

19. Although the Agreement of 2011 on temporary arrangements for the administration and security of the Abyei Area provides for a joint administration of Abyei by the Sudan and South Sudan, on 19 April, the new "head of Abyei Administrative Area", Kuol Alor Jok, appointed by South Sudan, issued decrees for a new government with six cabinet ministers and four advisers. This was following the dismissal of the former "Chief Administrator", Chol Deng Alak, in February 2017. So far, the Government of the Sudan has not reacted to the appointment of Kuol Alor Jok or his cabinet.

20. From 25 to 27 April, UNISFA facilitated the visit to Abyei of two prominent Dinka leaders, Francis Deng, former South Sudan Ambassador to the United Nations, and Bona Malwal, a Twic Dinka and former political adviser to the Presidency of the Sudan (2005-2011), on a two-day mission to inform the Ngok Dinka community of their recent talks with the Presidents of the Sudan and South Sudan "on the way forward for Abyei". Both urged negotiations and compromises from all sides, and the parties to begin discussing possible solutions to a final determination of the status of Abyei. They also called for development projects in Abyei and for the development of an "Abyei stabilization agenda".

21. On 30 May 2017, after more than two years of suspension, the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee met in Addis Ababa for an extraordinary session convened by the African Union. At the meeting, the parties were urged to commit to a functioning Joint Oversight Committee as a forum in which contentious issues could be addressed. The Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan were also asked to make a greater commitment to the operations of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee and the Abyei Area as a whole, and to support local initiatives. The meeting recognized the facilitation by UNISFA of intercommunity dialogue and pledged support for those efforts, given the willingness of the local communities to interact and coexist peacefully. Both parties signed an outcome document, in which they agreed that they would resume bimonthly meetings and that the next meeting would be held in the last week of July in Addis Ababa. They decided, also, that the traditional intercommunity meeting would be held at the same time. Unfortunately, no meeting was convened during the reporting period, but the African Union Facilitator has called for the next meeting of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee to be held on 16 and 17 August.

22. At several meetings in June, the UNISFA Acting Head of Mission and Force Commander engaged with a number of senior Government officials of the Sudan on the necessity to advance on the political track, building on the relative stability in the Abyei Area. He also emphasized the need for the two countries to establish institutions that would work towards ensuring governance and social services to the people in Abyei. In addition, he held meetings with the diplomatic and humanitarian communities, which were aimed at projecting the challenges and requirements in the Abyei Area so as to attract donor attention on the humanitarian front and have the diplomatic community engage the two States on a political path.

23. Late in June, the UNISFA Acting Head of Mission and Force Commander also travelled to Juba to convey a similar message to senior government officials of South Sudan. Despite these efforts and those of the Special Envoy for Sudan and South Sudan, no further progress has been made towards finding a solution to the final status of Abyei.

Intercommunal dialogue

24. The migration season has been relatively peaceful, with no large-scale incidents. Currently, the reverse migration is ongoing in the Abyei Area because of early rains, so far without incident.

25. The two communities have made significant progress in finding ways to coexist peacefully through the joint peace committees and judicial committees, as well as through interaction at the Amiet market and meetings organized by UNISFA. Various organizations continued to support intercommunal dialogue, and this has been useful in getting the two communities to work together and find ways of resolving local-level disputes. While these gains are commendable, the unresolved issues relating to the assassination of the Ngok Dinka Paramount Chief in May 2013 remain a stumbling block. The communities have begun to discuss how this matter can be resolved through a traditional approach. It is hoped that this discussion will also be the focus of the traditional leaders' meeting which was initially scheduled to be held at the next meeting of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee during the last week of July, and is now postponed to mid-August.

26. During the reporting period, UNISFA continued to assist both communities in their efforts to secure livelihoods by providing support for the Amiet common market. Pursuant to the agreement reached by the two communities in Todach on 4 August 2016, the common market was to function at Amiet only temporarily, until

31 December 2016, with the understanding that the two sides would reconvene in December 2016 to decide on its future location. At two subsequent UNISFA-organized meetings in December and January the two sides were not able to arrive at a written agreement on the future location of the market. The market continues to function at Amiet, however, and, whatever objections various stakeholders had previously voiced against its current location, these are currently on hold.

27. On 25 May, the joint peace committee made recommendations to improve the status of the Amiet common market and suggested construction and improvement of infrastructural facilities at the market. UNISFA hopes to be able to support some of the proposed projects in the next round of quick-impact projects, and has been encouraging other stakeholders to support this joint initiative.

28. As reported above, there have been sporadic criminal incidents related to the common market, some of which appear to be for commercial gain. In order to tackle criminality at the common market, UNISFA, on 14 December 2016, provided a temporary facility for the detention of suspects whose cases are related to the market. These cases are handled by the Joint Traditional Court. The technical and logistical support provided by two correction officers has strengthened UNISFA support for the market security committee at Amiet and the community protection committees in connection with detention facilities at Abyei and Agok.

29. Regarding the legal mechanisms to address criminal offences within the Abyei Area, the mission continued to engage authorities in the Sudan and South Sudan on arrangements for the handover of individuals detained by UNISFA in the performance of its mandate to protect civilians and ensure security in the Abyei Area. However, both Governments seem reluctant to agree to the proposed modalities for handing over criminals.

30. Thirteen conflict-management workshops and training sessions were organized by various stakeholders in the reporting period. Twenty-three quick-impact projects for the year 2016/17 were completed in close coordination with the two communities.

Humanitarian situation

31. The humanitarian situation has remained relatively stable in the absence of large-scale clashes and displacements in the Abyei Area. United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, and non-governmental organizations continued to provide humanitarian and recovery assistance to 163,000 vulnerable people in the Abyei Area. These included 11,000 people displaced from neighbouring states in South Sudan, and approximately 3,000 of these new arrivals were located in northern villages of Abyei as at the end of July. The number also includes 35,000 seasonal Misseriya nomads who left Abyei in June 2017 and are expected to return late in October 2017. Since the issuance of the last report, an estimated 10,000 people displaced by conflict in South Sudan transited through Abyei in order to reach destinations in the Sudan.

32. Despite the logistical challenges in South Sudan, 95 per cent of the food requirement for the rainy season was prepositioned in seven warehouses in southern and central parts of Abyei. Some 100,000 vulnerable people benefited from various food-related activities, mainly food for assets, food for education and general food distribution for the South Sudanese displaced people in the Abyei Area.

33. Efforts to support community livelihoods in the entire Abyei Area continued throughout the period. These included construction of three grinding mills; establishment of a pharmacy; construction of a community hall and a vegetable and

fish stall market; and distribution of assorted vegetable seeds and agricultural tools. Furthermore, a total of 49 community animal health workers were trained in animal husbandry and disease control. Dry season vaccination and treatment of Ngok Dinka and Misseriya livestock was undertaken, targeting 291,202 animals.

34. A temporary interruption of the provision of integrated primary health-care and nutrition services in 13 health facilities due to funding challenges has been resolved, and now all those facilities are operational. The nutrition targeted supplementary feeding programme covered 4,300 children under 5 and pregnant and lactating women, while the nutrition inpatient and outpatient programme covered 400 beneficiaries with tuberculosis, HIV and Kalazar. In addition, an average of 10 tons of nutrition food commodities was provided monthly to 1,500 internally displaced persons, children under 5 and pregnant and lactating women in the displacement sites. From 5 to 12 May, health partners conducted a successful measles immunization campaign covering 19,655 children under 5. The health and nutrition services in all facilities have been supported by awareness-raising and capacity-building activities, including on-the-job training for clinical staff, training of elementary health-service personnel at the village level and health awareness sessions. Targeted education materials were distributed to primary schools throughout the area.

35. A total of 21,700 schoolchildren received food support in 24 schools in Abyei. In addition, some 6,000 primary school students received high-energy biscuits. Two primary schools were rehabilitated in Noong returnee village and Al Radaya village.

36. Efforts with regard to safe water supply, such as drilling boreholes, repairing hand pumps and rehabilitating water yards, benefited at least 13,000 people. In the northern parts of the Abyei Area, ensuring a safe water supply for both residential communities and seasonal nomads remained a challenge as the water table is very deep, and the communities are living scattered across the areas. Other major activities included the training of water user committees and local authority counterparts in water management and maintenance of solar-powered water yards. However, with a limited law enforcement system, vandalism and theft of solar systems was rampant.

37. As a result of the weak protection presence and mechanism within Abyei, women and children were exposed to risks of violence, exploitation and abuse in some areas. South Sudanese people fleeing conflict who had recently settled in Abyei or were transiting through Abyei to various destinations in the Sudan were predominantly vulnerable women and children. Child protection concerns continued to be monitored in drop-in centres in Agok which support the reuniting of unaccompanied children with their families.

III. Status of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism

Political developments

38. On 14 and 15 May, the Joint Political and Security Mechanism met in Addis Ababa in an extraordinary session under the auspices of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel for the Sudan and South Sudan. The meeting, which was chaired by the former President of the Panel, Abdulsalami Abubakar, focused on the implementation of the decisions taken during the last extraordinary meeting, held on 15 October 2015, and subsequent ordinary sessions of the Mechanism. The Joint Political and Security Mechanism stressed the importance of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism, and agreed to focus on practical steps to

activate the latter and facilitate its work, namely, support for the establishment of four team sites; commitment to freedom of movement of all Mechanism personnel; the immediate commencement of ground monitoring missions; authorization of the use of the helipad in Gok Machar; acceleration of the process of approvals for aerial monitoring missions; and granting landing clearance for aerial monitoring missions, to be effective immediately within the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone. In support of these measures, UNISFA was requested to enhance the technological capability of the Mechanism's equipment to effectively conduct aerial monitoring missions. The Joint Political and Security Mechanism also directed the Joint Security Committee to meet to review the progress in the implementation of the decisions taken at previous meetings.

39. Relatively little concrete progress has been made in the implementation of the decisions taken at that meeting of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism. While the use of the Gok Machar helipad has commenced by UNISFA, an environment of freedom of movement enabling conduct of ground patrols has not yet materialized. The alleged presence of proxy groups within the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone makes the security of national monitors participating in ground patrols problematic, preventing the launch of ground patrols. Consequently, reconnaissance for locating team sites in the Zone has been postponed, awaiting an enabling security environment. Despite the agreement for the Joint Security Committee to meet three weeks after the Joint Political and Security Mechanism, the Committee meeting has been postponed by the Sudan. The Sudan has accused South Sudan of being involved in Darfur and having its forces north of the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone. South Sudan accuses the Sudan of harbouring opposition groups in the north. The regular meeting of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism, which it was agreed would be held at the end of June in Juba, remains pending. Equally, there has been no further progress on the formation of the ad hoc committee for the 14-Mile Area or on the activation of the four border crossings. Accordingly, the benchmarks for full operating capability, as outlined by the Secretary-General in 2015 (S/2015/439) remain largely unmet. These relate to the following: resolution of the dispute concerning the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone; resumption of border demarcation discussions; handover of documents for a non-binding opinion on disputed, then claimed, areas to African Union technical experts; regular meetings of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism; and full freedom of movement.

40. UNISFA engaged with the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan to encourage them to reinvigorate discussions on the status of Abyei and to make progress in relation to the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism in the light of the call in Security Council resolution 2312 (2017). On 21 June, together with members of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel, the UNISFA Acting Head of Mission and Force Commander met the Chief of Staff of the Sudanese Armed Forces in Khartoum, to urge implementation of the recent decisions of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism and to ensure that UNISFA can proceed with its tasks relating to the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism, as outlined by the Joint Political and Security Mechanism.

Operations

41. Because of the rainy season, poor infrastructure along the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone and continuing security threats en route to the Zone, ground monitoring missions have been deferred to the upcoming dry season. Planning, preparation and training for these missions and coordination with the local authorities for both sides is under way. However, some of the issues still pending relate to freedom of movement for personnel of the Joint Border Verification and

Monitoring Mechanism and the removal of all impediments to its operations; immediate commencement of ground patrolling; and acceleration of the process of approvals for aerial monitoring and granting of landing clearances for aerial monitoring missions.

42. For the period from 12 April until 20 July, 22 of the planned 27 aerial missions were successfully completed and 5 were cancelled (two because of unavailability of aircraft and two for technical problems with the aircraft).

43. Following the Security Council's previous call for progress towards full operating capability, a reconnaissance of the proposed Sector 3 location at Buram was conducted on 21 January, as indicated in my last report. A similar reconnaissance of the proposed location of Sector 4 at Malakal and Renk is scheduled for August. Another reconnaissance of the Sector 3 location at Buram is planned for September.

IV. Mission support

44. During the reporting period, the UNISFA military component stood at 4,515 (226 military observers/staff officers and 4,289 troops), against an authorized ceiling of 5,326. The authorized ceiling has subsequently been reduced to 4,791 in accordance with Security Council resolution 2352 (2017). The UNISFA police component strength was 25 police officers (7 female and 17 male) against an authorized ceiling of 50, who are deployed at four team sites (Abyei, Diffra, Banton and Agok) and the headquarters, Abyei. The total number of civilian staff stood at 130 international, 31 United Nations Volunteers and 78 national staff on board, against 164 international, 32 United Nations Volunteers and 89 national staff authorized. The Government of the Sudan issued 97 visas for UNISFA personnel, but visas for 12 staff members, 23 military personnel, 13 police and 16 contractors remain pending. During the reporting period, the mission completed the rotation of 3,918 (1,963 inbound and 1,955 outbound) troops and transportation of 230,714 kg (inbound 82,364 kg and outbound 148,350 kg) of goods through the Kadugli airport. Similarly 212,642 kg (59,997 kg inbound and 152,645 kg outbound) of goods were transported by road through Kadugli.

45. The Abyei camp expansion and work on improving mission infrastructure has been ongoing. As the perimeter wall is now fully functional, there has been a sharp decline in the number of thefts and break-ins inside the UNISFA compound and the United Nations common premises. The conversion of Noong temporary operating base into a permanent team site was completed by the end of June 2017. Military personnel living, office and level-I hospital accommodation space has been completed and occupied. Site preparation and construction of new military and mission subsistence allowance accommodation at the Abyei headquarters expansion site is ongoing, with 65 per cent progress, and will be completed by December 2017. The replacement of old prefabricated accommodation at all military camps was finalized. Of 36 planned wastewater treatment plants for all UNISFA camps, 17 have been installed, including 14 that are operational. The installation of equipment was delayed by late arrival and difficulties with customs clearance at the port of entry, in addition to the commencement of the rainy season that worsened road conditions.

46. The mission continued to operate four helicopters and three fixed-wing aircraft, and projects a utilization of 106 per cent of the budgeted hours by 30 June 2017. During the months of April to June 2017, the mission performed 16 sorties in support of Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism patrols and five sorties in support of Abyei Administration area patrols. UNISFA has also continued

to provide aviation support to the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the United Nations Mission in South Sudan through a cost-sharing arrangement in relation to the UNISFA CRJ aircraft that is based in Entebbe. Five patients were evacuated out of the mission area during the reporting period.

V. Financial aspects

47. The General Assembly, by its resolution 71/298 of 30 June 2017, appropriated the amount of $266.7 million for the maintenance of the Force for the period from 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018. As at 24 July 2017, unpaid assessed contributions to the Special Account for UNISFA amounted to $109.6 million. Total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations at that date amounted to $4,949.6 million. Reimbursement of troop costs has been made for the period up to 30 April 2017, while reimbursement of the costs of contingent-owned equipment has been made for the period up to 31 March 2017, in accordance with the quarterly payment schedule.

VI. Observations and recommendations

48. I commend recent efforts by the two Governments to revitalize their political dialogue but I regret that the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan have made no further progress in the implementation of the Agreement of 20 June 2011, including the establishment of the joint interim institutions — the Abyei Area Administration, the Abyei Area Council and the Abyei Police Service. The meeting of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee in May 2017, after a suspension of two years and two months, while a positive development in itself, is not enough of a step to indicate any significant progress towards breaking the political stalemate. While the meeting did make a significant step in deciding when to have the next meeting and in the parties' commitment to support the work of UNISFA, the differences and mistrust between them are evident. However, I am encouraged by the commitment of the Co-Chairs of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee to attend the meeting in Addis Ababa despite its postponement until 16 August, as well as their indication that the traditional intercommunity meeting will be held at the same time.

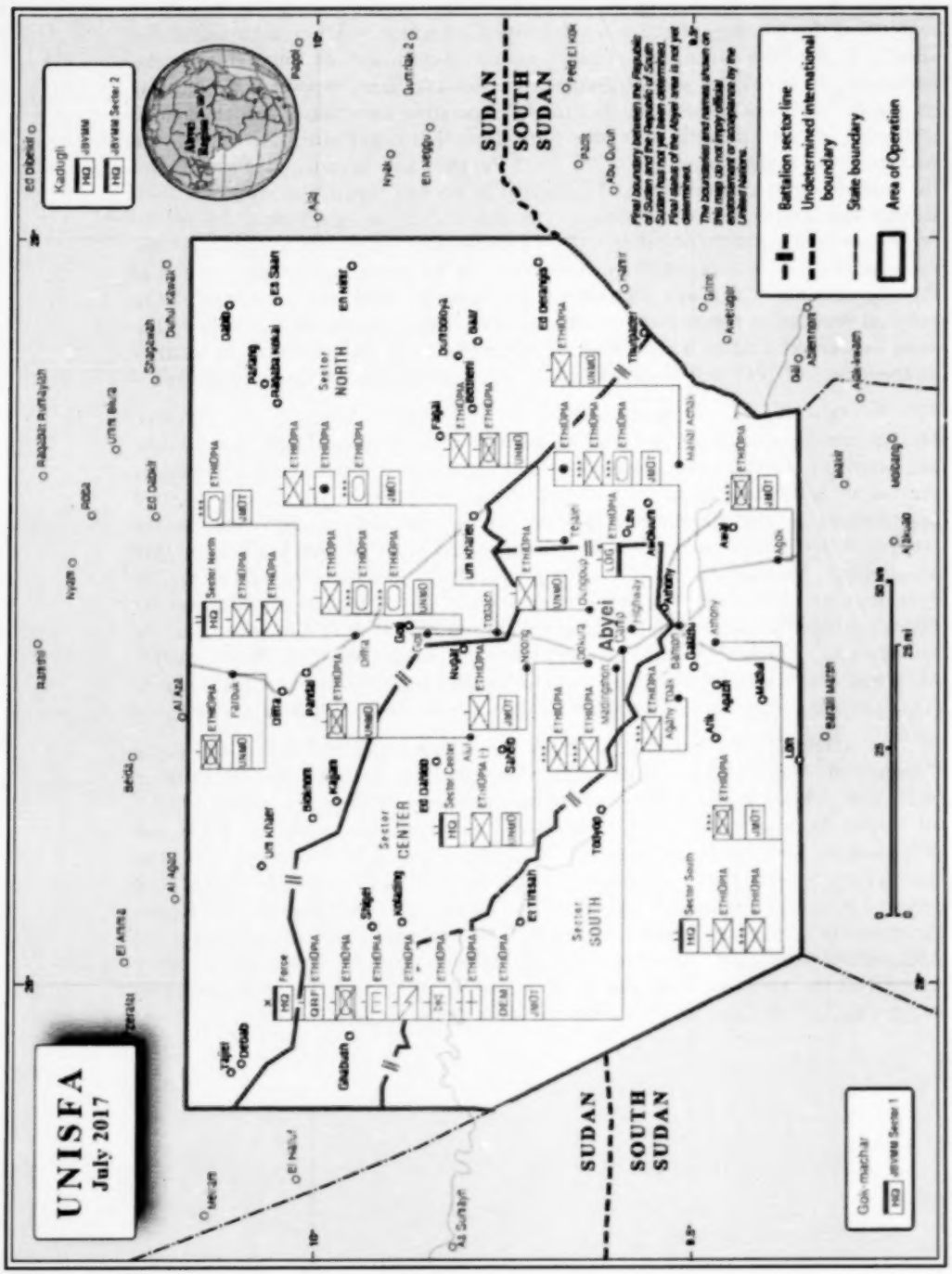
49. Rather than limiting themselves to scheduling a next meeting, Abyei Joint Oversight Committee meetings are expected to address the humanitarian, security and administrative concerns of the people of Abyei, advance the implementation of the Agreement of 20 June 2011 on joint institutions, and prepare the ground for an agreement on the Area's final status. It is my sincere hope that frequent interactions will ease the tensions between the parties and will also build confidence among the local communities and encourage grass-roots peacebuilding initiatives. In this regard, I reiterate the need to achieve closure on the 2013 killing of the Ngok Dinka Paramount Chief.

50. The lack of progress towards a final settlement, and the failure of the two Governments to establish a joint administration in Abyei, deprives UNISFA of an exit horizon and places on it the non-mandated burden of tackling issues that are supposed to be resolved by a government, rather than by an interim United Nations mission. I call on the members of the Security Council to exert efforts to raise the awareness of the Abyei stakeholders on the importance and urgency of progress towards resolving the issue of Abyei and towards implementing their own agreements, as an open-ended mandate for UNISFA may not be acceptable or affordable for the international community in the long run.

51. Both the Sudan and South Sudan have reiterated their commitment to the work of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism and, while I commend the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan for the positive atmosphere and progress at the recent meeting of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism, I regret that the meeting of the Joint Security Committee was not held within the stipulated deadline owing to recent mutual accusations of interference and harbouring of opposition groups. I emphasize that continued support is conditional on the fulfilment of the benchmarks for full operating capabilities, which include resolution of the dispute over the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone and the occurrence of regular meetings of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism and the Joint Security Committee. As I indicated in my last report, the scope for Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism activity is significantly limited by the paralysis in the political process. Thus I encourage both parties to jointly review the political and security conditions necessary for the successful implementation of their agreements, which would go a long way towards enhancing confidence in the political process. In the absence of such a commitment, international support to the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism and the agreement on security arrangements of 2012 will be at risk and the future of the Mechanism in jeopardy.

52. In this regard, I have written to the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Mr. Hailemariam Desalegn, and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, to welcome their engagement with the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan to encourage them to address the current political impediments to the stabilization of the Abyei Area and urgently request the immediate resumption of their cooperation on the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism and the border. My Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, has written to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Sudan, Mr. Ibrahim Ahmed Abd al-Aziz Ghandour, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of South Sudan, Mr. Deng Alor Kwol, to encourage them to jointly review the political and security conditions necessary for the successful implementation of the UNISFA mandate.

53. In conclusion, I would like to thank the Acting Head of Mission and Force Commander, Major General Tesfay Gidey Hailemichael, for his efforts to enhance peace and stability in the Abyei Area, often under very difficult conditions. I thank all United Nations staff, including staff of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, for their commitment to the cause of peace in the Abyei Area. The work of my Special Envoy, Nicholas Haysom, in trying to re-energize the political process is much appreciated. Finally, my thanks are also due to the former Presidents of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel, Thabo Mbeki and Abdulsalami Abubakar; the African Union Commission; the Peace and Security Council of the African Union; and the Government of Ethiopia for their unstinting support for UNISFA and for their commitment to peace in the Abyei Area.


UNISFA
July 2017
SUDAN
SOUTH SUDAN
Abyei
Kadugli
Sector NORTH
Sector CENTER
Sector SOUTH
Sector South
Battalion sector line
Undetermined international boundary
State boundary
Area of Operation
Map No. 4467 Rev. 35 UNITED NATIONS
July 2017 (Colour)
Department of Field Support
Geospatial Information Section (formerly Cartographic Section)